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ABSTRACT

A review of the literature on work and family as it pertains to administrative careers of women in higher education was conducted. The review revealed a continuing increase since 1900 in the number and proportion of women faculty. However, women are not moving up in the academic ranks and therefore are not likely to be considered for administrative posts. The literature review resulted in the formulation of eight hypotheses to be tested in a later study: (1) married women are less likely to move into administrative positions than are married men; (2) single women are more likely to move into administrative positions than are married women; (3) women with orderly careers are more likely to move into and remain in administrative positions than women with disorderly careers; (4) women with one or more children are less likely to hold administrative positions than are women without children; (5) critical life events, such as divorce or death of a spouse, child, or parent, can increase the likelihood that women will move into administrative positions; (6) differences among career paths of women administrators will be apparent by cohort; (7) institutions that value and encourage leadership training for their administrators are more likely to select women for administrative posts than are institutions that do not value leadership training; and (8) private religiously affiliated institutions are more likely to select women for administrative posts than are private independent and public institutions of higher education. (NB)

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CAREER PATHS OF WOMEN ADMINISTRATORS: THE INTERSECTION OF WORK AND FAMILY

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CAREER PATHS OF WOMEN ADMINISTRATORS: THE INTERSECTION OF WORK AND FAMILY

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to theoretically explore the intersection of work and family careers for women administrators in higher education. An earlier study (Sederberg, 1991) which focused primarily on mentoring as a variable in the careers of women in higher education, provided findings which raised new questions about career development. Piqued by those questions, this paper evolved. Thus, this work is an effort to review the literature on work and family as it pertains to administrative careers of women in higher education. Hypotheses are developed to be tested in a later study.

Historically, administrators in higher education have been male. Thus most of the studies on career paths of administrators have used male subjects. Now that women are moving into higher education in greater numbers, the opportunities for them to pursue their careers in higher education itself are potentially greater. As a result, it is important that career paths, particularly as they pertain to women, be studied, and the variables of possible supports and barriers to women's progress be discerned.

Review of Literature

As we in higher education seek ways to support and encourage diversity in our institutions, a way to begin is by looking at our own structures. For example, since 1900, there has been a continuing increase in the number of women faculty (Touchton and Davis, 1991). In addition to sheer numbers, the proportion of women faculty too has grown, from 20 percent in 1900 to 29 percent in 1984 (Touchton and Davis, 1991).

However, women are not yet moving up in the academic ranks. In 1985, 55 percent of all women in ranked faculty positions were either assistant professors or instructors. In contrast, 70 percent of all men in ranked positions were either professors or associate professors (Touchton and Davis, 1991).

According to Moore (1983), the "orderly" career path for administrators (usually male), has been faculty member, department chair, dean, provost, and president. It becomes clear that if women do not move up the academic ranks, they are not likely to be considered for administrative posts.

It should come as no surprise, then, that women are greatly outnumbered by men in administrative positions. In fact, administrators in higher education tend to be predominantly white, middle-aged males (Touchton and Davis, 1991; Moore, 1983).

To further illuminate the differences, it may be helpful to share some statistics by administrative area. In 1987, on the average, 27 percent of deans in academic areas were women. But the proportion of women in administrative positions decreases as

one moves up the ladder. For example, the percentage of women in the respective administrative area decreases from 25 percent for chief student affairs officer, to 20 percent for chief development officer, 17 percent for chief academic affairs officer, 10 percent for chief business officer, and 10 percent for CEO's of single institution (Touchton and Davis, 1991).

Moore (1983) describes differences by sex and marital status in her work. In the Leaders survey she cites, 79.5 percent of the presidents are currently married and living with their spouses. Of those remaining, 15.4 percent of the presidents are members of religious orders. This leaves 5.1 percent of presidents who are single, divorced, or widowed.

When the data on presidents and their marital status are compared by sex, clear differences are observable. Of the 13 women presidents in the Leaders study cited by Moore, 11 belong to religious orders and two are divorced (Moore, 1983). In other words, no women presidents in this study are married. On the face of this finding, it appears that being married is a barrier for women administrators but not for men. This leads to the development of a hypothesis that women administrators are more likely to be single (including never married, widowed, or divorced) than married.

Touchton and Davis (1991) present data that show some positive growth in the numbers of women presidents. They point out that between 1975 and 1989, the number of female college and university presidents nationally more than doubled (from 148 to

328). In 1989, women held 11 percent of all such positions, up from 5 percent in 1975.

Interestingly, of the women presidents in 1989, only 23% were members of a religious order (Touchton and Davis, 1991: 102). Yet in this same recent work by Touchton and Davis (1991) data on marital status of female administrators were noticeably absent.

Women are especially vulnerable to work and relationship issues (Helgesen, 1990). Women seem to experience stressors and life changes more acutely than men. And unlike business organizations, which have found it beneficial to identify and groom their future leaders, educational institutions continue to follow a policy of "natural selection" (Moore, 1983).

In order to encourage more women to move into upper-level administrative positions, it is necessary to learn more about possible career paths. The earlier study (Sederberg, 1991) only touched the surface of the importance of supports and barriers that exist in administrative careers for women, especially those that pertain to work and family issues. The results of a more focused study could improve our understanding and lead to better higher education leadership opportunities for women, as well as for other minorities and men.

The family career in the family development framework as described by Aldous (1978) includes points at which work and family intersect. The interaction of key work and family events and their timing has pervaded much of the stress and coping

literature (Holmes and Rahe, 1967; Antonovsky, 1979). However, our review of the literature has not yet revealed any studies that show how these factors interact to affect the development of women's work careers generally, or specifically, in higher education administration.

Gardner (1990) stresses that a leader engages in the process of persuading others to try to achieve shared objectives. A manager usually refers to an individual who holds a directive post in an organization, who presides over the organization's functions, who allocates resources prudently, and makes the best possible use of people. First class managers have good leadership skills, but not all managers are effective leaders. In other words, not all administrators are leaders, and leaders may be found at all levels of the organization.

For this paper, however, leader and administrator are interchangeable concepts. This is reinforced by Gardner (1990) who conceptualizes leadership developmentally. He points out that leaders undergo changes over the course of their active careers; in other words, leaders evolve.

Leadership and the Need to Develop Women Leaders

Gardner (1990) points out the special need to develop women as leaders. Yet as Moore (1983) points out, no institution-wide programs are available to guide the professional development and advancement of college administrators generally; no formal schools of training are available for academic leaders.

Although Gardner (1990) believes that the increasing prominence of women in leadership ranks is inevitable, he indicates that substantial obstacles still exist. He stresses that leadership programs for women must deal with these obstacles. But first it is important to clarify just what blocks the way for women.

Barriers in the Workplace

According to Lynch (1990:2) three types of boundaries must be crossed: (1) hierarchial boundaries, such as degrees and certification; (2) functional boundaries, which separate different departments or divisions; and (3) inclusion boundaries, which differentiate individuals by their position within the organization in relation to the center of power. The inclusion boundaries are often difficult to discern, and are the most difficult for women to cross.

In regard to the hierarchial boundaries, such as doctoral degrees, some important changes are on the horizon. According to Touchton and Davis (1991:82), by 1998 women are projected to receive 46 percent of all doctorates awarded that year.

Gardner (1990) says the more serious barriers of prejudice and discrimination still confront young women who have leadership potential. On the path to leadership, most of the gatekeepers are men. Many of these male gatekeepers still cannot fully accept women as leaders.

Sandler and Hall (1986) describe a perceptual barrier to

women in a similar way. Leadership--the key quality sought in administrators--has generally been associated with men and with male styles of behavior.

According to Gardner (1990), the obstacles are giving way, but mainly at the lower and middle levels of organization. This is supported by the data which show growing numbers of women in lower academic ranks.

Minor (1989:349-51) groups career issues in the workplace into three types. The first is access to the hierarchy, which was restricted for women until the early 1970s. The second issue is advancement, which in business and academic institutions is characterized by the higher the position in the hierarchy, the lower the percentage of women in it. This too is supported by the data which show smaller and smaller percentages of women in top administrative positions as we move up the ladder. In addition, the higher the position, the greater the salary discrepancy between men and women. Clearly, the "glass ceiling" exists, where women can get close enough to see the top, but cannot advance because of invisible barriers. The third issue is balance, which includes the work versus relationship issues. Again, according to Touchton and Davis (1991:85) in 1987, 60 percent of the men receiving doctorates were married, but only 52 percent of the women. Clearly work, educational, and family issues impact women differently.

Career Development Models for Women

Minor (1989:348) stresses the importance of self-concept and career choice. She briefly describes Linda Gottfredson's model (1981), which suggests that self-concept (defined as gender, social class, intelligence, interests, and values) together with occupational images (sex type, prestige level, and field) determine occupational preferences. These occupational preferences, together with a perception of job accessibility (opportunities and barriers), determine a range of acceptable occupational alternatives.

Gottfredson's model highlights the importance of the sex-role socialization of the individual, the perceived sex type (appropriateness for one sex or the other) of the occupation, and the perceptions of opportunities or barriers to women on women's career choices. Again we see an important intersection of work and family issues, even in early occupational selection. A hypothesis developed here is that intelligent women who were socialized early to consider a wide range of occupational choices are more likely to move into administrative positions than intelligent women who were not socialized to consider a wide range of choices.

Ordering of Events in the life Course

Hogan (1978) says that the passage to adulthood no longer is marked by a single, dramatic rite. But the occurrence of certain life events generally indicates the attainment of adult status.

Among American males, the most important events have included completing formal schooling; achieving relative economic independence by starting a full-time first job; and forming a nuclear family of procreation through marriage.

According to Hogan (1978), the normative order of events in the life course for men is schooling, job, and marriage. Two non normative modes are when marriage follows schooling, or when schooling follows marriage. He points out that college attendance increases the probability of a disorderly sequencing of events in the early life cycle.

Each cohort will exhibit broad agreement as to which approximate age it is appropriate to start working, first marry, and have a first child. In some cases this has been the result of a societal event, such as a depression or a war.

Alas, Hogan did not study women. However, a recent work by Astin and Leland (1991) supports the importance of cohort differences in the sequencing of life events in the lives of women administrators in higher education.

This review of literature led to the development of the hypothesis that women with orderly careers (i.e., career patterns most like that of men) would be more likely to move into and remain in higher education administration than women with disorderly careers. A related hypothesis is that cohort differences will emerge among women administrators in regard to sequencing of life events.

A Theoretical Leadership Model

Clearly there is a need to develop a description of a leadership model for women that incorporates family issues, life events, work and family changes, and work and family stressors that will be encountered along their career paths.

Using two key variables, degree of leadership skill and concern for women's issues, Leonard and Sigall (1989:233-35) developed a leadership model for women students. Perhaps these four types could be adapted to help us better understand women who aspire to administrative positions: (1) women who do not try to develop any leadership role; (2) women who are leaders but are male identified; (3) women who identify with women's issues but are unable to act; (4) women who are leaders and identify a woman's agenda as part of their commitment.

Leonard and Sigall (1989) cite research that shows that even though the majority of student organizations are coeducational, males tend to hold most of the leadership positions. Undergraduate women are <u>not</u> provided with experiences to lead in proportion to their numbers.

This view is supported by others. For example, Gardner (1990) believes there are plenty of women capable of filling a variety of leadership roles and styles. He stresses that the problem is not one of performance but of opportunity. He believes that we should give young people a sense of the varieties of leaders and leadership styles, and encourage them to move toward the models that are right for them. In other words,

the fact that there are many kinds of leaders has implications for leadership education.

Opportunities are lacking not just for undergraduate women in our colleges and universities, but for all women in the workplace setting of our institutions, including governing boards. In 1985, women constituted only 23 percent of voting members of governing boards in public institutions, and only 20 percent of the members in independent institutions (Touchton and Davis, 1991:108). Women are clearly not represented at the highest level of higher education administration. This certainly is not due to lack of numbers of women available for the positions, but to variables in their career development, including barriers and lack of appropriate support.

In 1986, among all women in the population who were age 16 and older, 65 percent of single women (never married) were in the labor force, as were 55 percent of married women, and 43 percent of widowed or divorced women (Touchton and Davis, 1991: 27). The interaction of the variables of sex and marital status may operate to prevent women from moving ahead in ways we do not yet clearly understand.

In recent review articles, Menaghan and Parcel (1990) and Voydanoff (1990) stressed a need for future research to increase interdisciplinary attention to theory; to promote longitudinal investigation of work, family life and the individual; and to affect policy which would in turn reduce work-family-individual stressors and strains. Hopefully this review will add to the

knowledge base in some of these areas. In particular, this review stresses the strength of an interdisciplinary approach in developing theory.

Hypotheses

One

Married women are less likely to move into administrative positions than are married men.

Two

Single women (never married, widowed, divorced) are more likely to move into administrative positions than are married women.

Three

Women with orderly careers are more likely to move into and remain in administrative positions than women with disorderly careers.

Four

Women with one or more children are less likely to hold administrative positions than are women without children.

Five

Critical life events, such as divorce, or death of spouse, parent or child, can increase the likelihood that women will move into administrative positions.

Six

Differences among career paths of women administrators will be apparent by cohort.

Seven

Institutions that value and encourage leadership training for their administrators are more likely to select women for administrative posts than institutions that do not value leadership training.

Eight

Private religiously affiliated institutions are more likely to select women for administrative posts than are private independent, and public institutions of higher education.

This summary of hypotheses is derived from the literature review and the Sederberg (1991) study. They await further testing. Innovative methods for gathering data now need to be explored.

Implications for Further Study

Some comments from the earlier study (Sederberg, 1991) and some citations in the literature review, relate to unplanned careers. For example, when asked if they are currently doing what they planned or expected ten years ago, half of the respondents in the Sederberg (1991) study said no.

Both the initial study (Sederberg, 1991) and the literature review supported the concept of cohort differences. For example, women administrators 55 years of age and older seemed to follow a more orderly career path. Women administrators ages 40 to 55 seemed to try to have it all. They

frequently combined career, marriage, education, and children in a variety of sequences. The younger women, those between 30 and 40 years of age, were more likely to delay marriage and/or families until they were more established in their careers. This finding seems to fits the generational differences in women's higher education leadership roles as described in the recent work by Astin and Leland (1991).

It also appears that women do not set goals and plan careers the way men are reported to do. Often women responded (Sederberg, 1991): "This job was just offered to me. I didn't seek it." Serendipity, family crises such as death or divorce were cited frequently as factors that related to women's career development.

Summary and Discussion

In the earlier study (Sederberg, 1991), when asked, "What advice would you give a young women today who is considering a career in higher education administration?" the majority of respondents stressed "Get a Ph.D." In other words, the degree is perceived as critical in order to overcome the hierarchial boundaries that exist in higher education administration. This too is supported by the literature review.

Other advice included: "Put your priorities in line and never compromise yourself." Serious self-study on personal priorities is important, especially if a young woman wants to combine marriage, and/or motherhood and career. It is important

to realize that it isn't necessary to "have it all" at one time. There are passages in one's life. A successful, satisfied person is one who finds contentment and fulfillment in the progression from one stage to another.

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